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PREPARING COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS: THE AACC CORE COMPETENCIES FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP & DOCTORAL EDUCATION

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Community colleges in the United States face shortages of leaders prepared to assume administrative positions in the 21st century. To respond to this shortage, graduate programs are emerging with a specific emphasis on community college leadership; other graduate programs offer broader curricula focused on educational leadership, policy, or higher education. The community college environment is distinct from other types of higher education and requires specific leadership skills. The American Association of Community Colleges has identified six core competencies for essential leadership in today's community college. Using the core competencies as a framework, this study analyzed California community college leaders' perceptions of these competencies, including those which they believe can be acquired and developed through doctoral studies. Respondents also identified additional competencies that could be addressed in doctoral programs.

Imminent administrative shortages in community colleges across the United States are fueling the need to prepare new leaders for community colleges in the 21st century. The expected shortages result from anticipated retirements among college presidents, the increasing age of college presidents, and a decrease in the number of "advanced degrees conferred in community college administration" (Shults, 2001, p. 1). In 1998, Vaughan and Weisman reported that 45% of presidents anticipated retiring over the next 6 years with the remaining presidents indicating they planned to retire by the end of 10 years.

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Given that the report is now over 10 years old, it is likely that most, if not all, of the respondents in the original study have retired. The trend of administrative shortages appears to persist and may be increasing. As noted by Weisman and Vaughan (2002), by 2001 “the rate of anticipated presidential retirements appeared to be accelerating, with more than 79 percent of the presidents planning to retire within 10 years” (p. 1). This suggests the need to quickly prepare future educational leaders to fill vacancies at many executive levels, including college president.

As early as 1985, trustees of the California State University (CSU) had considered expanding “the mission of the state university to include awarding an independent doctoral degree in education” (California Postsecondary Education Commission [CPEC], 1987, summary). At the time, the possible expansion of the state university mission challenged “one of the basic provisions of the Master Plan [for Higher Education in California] which assigns responsibility for doctoral-level programs (with the exception of joint doctoral programs) to the University of California” (CPEC, 1987, p. 1). As a result, CPEC initiated a study to analyze the need for additional doctoral programs in California, asserting that its “interest in [the proposal] stems from a mandate to involve itself in matters affecting the differentiation of functions among the three public segments [of higher education], as well as from its responsibility to assess the need for new degree programs” (CPEC, 1987, p. 1). CPEC ultimately concluded that at the time their report was written, there was no anticipated shortage of administrators or of people qualified to fill administrative vacancies in the state. The commission recommended that no additional doctoral programs be added, yet also recommended that an “intersegmental committee” investigate the need for doctoral programs “specifically for present and future administrators in California’s Community Colleges” (CPEC, 1987, p. 33).

By 2005, attitudes regarding administrative vacancies had changed in response to impending retirements as well as a shortage of qualified applicants for leadership positions (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005; Romero, 2004). To address the anticipated shortage of community college leaders in California, then-Senator Jack Scott introduced Senate Bill 724 in 2005 to allow the CSU system to offer independent doctorates in education (EdD) focused on community college leadership and administration. The goal of the legislation was to “respond to the urgent need for well-prepared administrators to lead public school and community college reform efforts” (CSU, n.d.[a]). Prior to the passage of SB 724, some CSU campuses offered joint doctoral degrees in partnership with other public and private universities, but,

as noted in the CPEC report (CPEC, 1987), were not able to offer independent doctoral degrees. The passage of SB 724 lifted this restriction. As a result, seven CSU campuses began offering the EdD in fall 2007, thereby adding to the programs available in California. As of this writing, 10 CSU campuses offer the EdD with 4 additional campuses preparing to offer the degree (CSU, n.d. [b]). The Association of California Community College Administrators (ACCCA) routinely updates its list of “Doctoral Programs for Community College Administrators”; while the list is not complete, there are currently 15 programs included (ACCCA, 2009). Clearly, there are ample opportunities in public and private universities for community college administrators to pursue a doctorate in educational administration and leadership; of these programs, some focus on community college leadership while others focus on broader higher education leadership, educational policy, or educational administration. Although many doctoral programs are responsive to local needs (CSU, n.d.[a]), it is also necessary to address leadership needs from a broad perspective, thus ensuring that doctoral students are ultimately prepared to work in a variety of regions across the state and even the nation (Duvall, 2003). This exploratory study emerged from my own inquiry as a faculty member in a doctoral program when I considered whether what is taught throughout California is congruent with the skills current community college leaders identify as necessary for effective educational leadership.

This study extends the research of Brown, Martinez, and Daniel (2002) and Hammons and Miller (2006), which examined graduate-preparation programs and their ability to prepare community college leaders. In addition, this study broadens these initial discussions in that it uses the lens of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) core competencies of effective leadership to determine the types of preparation graduate programs might provide. Finally, the study focuses on the EdD because, as CPEC (1987) suggested, the EdD has been assumed to prepare practitioners to fill administrative positions and, consequently, is often considered the “doctorate of practice” (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008, p. 17).

Using the core competencies for effective leadership developed by the AACC (2005), the purpose of the study was to identify skills needed for community college leadership in California and determine which, if any, of these skills could be acquired through doctoral studies that lead to the EdD. The study was conducted in California for two reasons: first, there are 110 community colleges and 72 community college districts in the state (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office [CCCCO], 2009), making it a rich environment

for investigation; second, since the passage of SB 724, California has seen a dramatic increase in the number of EdD programs available. Doctoral programs have the potential to prepare leaders to fill anticipated administrative vacancies, and it is essential to ensure that programs focus on skills identified by practitioners as necessary for effective leadership. Though study participants are limited to those in California, the results confirm prior research on community college presidents across the United States (Duree, 2007), extend current research on leadership competencies, and can inform doctoral program faculty as well as community college leaders in a variety of settings.

Although there are both formal and informal leaders in organizations, this study focused on formal leaders; that is, it focused on those leaders in administrative positions. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Which of the AACC core competencies do California community college leaders believe are essential for effective leaders?
2. Which of the AACC core competencies do California community college leaders believe can be developed through doctoral studies?
3. What additional competencies do California community college leaders believe can be acquired or developed through doctoral studies?

AACC CORE COMPETENCIES

While there are other ways to consider leadership competencies, such as social and emotional intelligence (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2004), this study relied on the AACC core competencies because they were developed by community college practitioners specifically in relation to the community college context; furthermore, “[the] framework has wide utility for both individuals and institutions. It helps emerging leaders chart their personal leadership development progress. It provides program developers with curricula guidelines” (AACC, n.d.). The core competencies developed from work beginning with AACC-sponsored leadership summits in 2003 and 2004 and a survey distributed to summit participants in December 2004; the six core competencies that resulted from these efforts are organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism.

A subsequent document, *Competencies for community college leaders* (AACC, 2005), describes these competencies in detail, including philosophical statements related to each competency and illustrations of the competency. For example, the following is the philosophical statement related to the competency of organizational strategy:

An effective community college leader strategically improves the quality of the institution, protects the long-term health of the organization, promotes the success of all students, and sustains the community college mission, based on knowledge of the organization, its environment, and future trends. (AACC, 2005, p. 3)

Following is one of the illustrations listed for this competency: “Assess, develop, implement, and evaluate strategies regularly to monitor and improve the quality of education and the long-term health of the organization” (AACC, 2005, p. 3). By reviewing the general core competency in conjunction with the philosophical statement and accompanying illustrations, one can develop a sense of the overall competency, how community college leaders might implement this competency, and the skills needed to develop the competency. Furthermore, faculty in educational leadership programs could use these illustrations to analyze their curriculum and related program learning outcomes to ensure a strong connection between academic preparation and the development of the competencies.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Community college leaders appear to acquire their skills primarily through on the job training, professional development, and mentoring (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Duree, 2007). Amey and VanDerLinden (2002) discovered that most of the educational administrators in their study followed career paths that allowed them to develop their skills incrementally; that is, the administrators used previous positions to acquire and develop skills required for higher level administrative positions. They also found that professional development activities were important in that “administrators are involved in a large number of professional development and networking activities” (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002, p. 15); typically, the professional development activities were those “offered on individual campuses” (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002, p. 15), though some administrators did participate in external activities. Many of the administrators in Amey and VanDerLinden’s study (2002) also

mentioned the importance of a mentor: over half indicated they had mentors, while slightly less than half indicated they had also served as mentors for others.

Duree (2007) investigated how different experiences help educational leaders acquire the “transformational leadership skills embedded in the AACC’s *Competencies for Community College Leaders* (p. 6); 415 community college presidents responded to his survey in which they were asked to answer 40 questions in seven areas, such as professional background, career experiences, and educational preparation (Duree, 2007). One section of the survey focused specifically on the AACC core competencies and asked respondents to rate both their level of preparedness in terms of the competency and the level of its importance in relation to community college leadership. This section of the survey was organized using the six broad core competencies (organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism) and supplemented with illustrations of each competency. Overwhelmingly, the respondents rated the core competencies as important or very important to their role as president; in general, they also indicated they were well prepared or prepared for their first presidency in relation to the competencies. In addition, the respondents indicated that prior positions prepared them for the presidency, professional development activities—both external and internal—supported their preparation, and mentoring relationships were also cited as important. While these results focus specifically on the community college presidency, they do echo the results of Amey and VanDerLinden (2002); thus, they reinforce the importance of career pathways (on the job training), professional development, and mentoring for preparing academic leaders.

Both Amey and VanDerLinden (2002) and Duree (2007) also found that many community college presidents had a doctorate, often in fields such as educational leadership or educational policy; however, their studies yielded different results regarding a doctorate with a community college emphasis: Among Amey and VanDerLinden’s respondents “[less] than 2 percent of presidents with doctorates specified that their field of study was specific to community college leadership or administration” (2002, p. 11); while in Duree’s study, “slightly more than one-third of the respondents completed a doctoral program with an emphasis in community college leadership” (2007, p. 113).

As he considered the anticipated shortage of community college leaders, Boggs (2003) outlined opportunities as well as challenges associated with such dramatic organizational changes. One such

opportunity is the potential to bring “greater diversity, new energy, and new ideas” (Boggs, 2003, p. 16) to the community college setting. And while he asserted that community college leadership positions are increasingly filled by women, thus moving toward greater gender diversity, he noted a need to strengthen efforts to expand ethnic diversity. He went on to identify critical personal traits needed for 21st century community college leaders including high ethical standards, integrity, fairness, and openness to new ideas. He stressed the importance of relationships noting that “leaders must find ways to involve people in their decisions” (Boggs, 2003, p. 20); furthermore, he suggested that leaders need specific knowledge and skills to be successful and that these skills can be acquired through professional development activities and mentoring experiences.

Given that the work of Amey and VanDerLinden (2002), Boggs (2003), and Duree (2007) reinforce the role of on the job training, professional development, and mentoring in developing effective leadership skills, it is reasonable to ask what role doctoral programs may have in supporting the development of essential leadership competencies. Furthermore, as Hammons and Miller (2006) noted, “Programs in higher education administration/leadership and community college leadership are plentiful, but there are serious questions about whether they can meet the demands of the contemporary 2-year college” (p. 373); they conclude that we should “embrace this opportunity to hold a national dialogue about the issues relevant to community colleges that preparation programs should be addressing” (p. 380). This study contributes to this dialogue by asking current community college leaders about skills needed for effective leadership in today’s community college and suggesting which of these skills (or competencies) could be incorporated into doctoral studies.

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to identify skills needed for community college leadership in California and determine which, if any, of these skills could be acquired through doctoral studies. Due to the sheer number of community colleges in the state, a history of regulation, complex budget allocation models, and mandatory shared governance practices, educational leaders in California community college operate in an environment representative of those found in other states (Vaughan & Weisman, 1998). The emergence of doctoral programs focused on community college leadership provides faculty

as well as community college leaders across the United States the opportunity to examine the congruence between today's community college environment, skills needed for successful leadership today and in the future, and the ability of doctoral program studies to support the acquisition and/or development of those skills.

For the purposes of this exploratory study, a survey was the most appropriate methodology in that it allowed me to reach a large audience and identify potential areas for further study. The survey consisted of 31 questions and was divided into three sections: (a) the core competencies essential for effective leadership in relation to administrators at the respondent's college, (b) how the core competencies can be acquired and developed, and (c) the core competencies in relation to doctoral programs in educational/community college leadership. Questions at the end of the survey asked about each respondent's college/district. Survey respondents were also given the opportunity to share additional competencies they believed essential for effective leadership that could be acquired through doctoral studies.

The first section of the survey regarding the core competencies included a list of each core competency (for example, organizational strategy) and illustrations of the competency based on the AACC document, *Core Competencies for Community College Leaders* (2005). Using a Likert-scale format, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed/disagreed that the core competency was essential to effective leadership; possible responses were strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree (see Table 1 for an example).

Prior to distributing the survey, it was sent to 14 California community college leaders (one academic senate president, four presidents, four chief instructional officers, two chief business officers, and three chief student services officers); 8 participants from the pilot study responded to the survey and provided feedback. Their feedback was incorporated into the final version of the survey. The final survey was distributed via several existing e-mail lists managed by the CCCCCO. The mailing lists (or listservs) include those people identified by each community college or community college district as the academic senate president (ASP), chief business officer (CBO), chief executive officer (CEO), chief instructional officer (CIO), and chief student services officer (CSSO). Because there are 110 community colleges and 72 districts in California, I anticipated approximately 200 names on each list with some variations due to local administrative structures; in actuality, each list had from 187 to 227 names. Prior to administering the full survey, I emailed an Invitation

Table 1. Example of survey question

Please indicate the degree to which you agree each aspect of ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY is essential to the effective performance of administrators at your college:

	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree
Assess, develop, implement, and evaluate strategies to monitor and improve the quality of education.					
Assess, develop, implement, and evaluate strategies to monitor and improve the long-term health of the organization.					
Use data-driven evidence and proven practices to solve problems, make decisions, and plan strategically.					
Use a systems perspective (that is, a view that organizational departments are interrelated) to assess and respond to the culture of the organization.					
Use a systems perspective to assess and respond to changing demographics.					

to Participate to all members on each of the e-mail lists. Several people sent replies indicating that while they were on the electronic mailing list they did not actually serve in that position. I then added an “other” category to allow those potential respondents to identify their position at the college or district. The survey was distributed to 1,071 e-mail addresses via the five electronic mailing lists. Participants were asked to respond to the survey within five days; a thank you/reminder message was sent after the deadline to encourage additional responses.

FINDINGS

Of those who received the survey, 113 agreed to participate. The respondents provided a great deal of information that can help doctoral program faculty consider how to best address leadership competencies. There is a fairly even distribution of respondents by

position (ASP: 9.1%; CBO: 14.5%; CEO: 20.0%; CIO: 16.4%; CSSO: 17.3%; Other: 22.7%). And while this is a low response rate, the results regarding the acquisition of the core competencies correspond to the findings of Amey and VanDerLinden (2002) and Duree (2007), thus supporting the overall findings and the ability to draw conclusions about the findings. Amey and VanDerLinden surveyed administrators in a variety of roles, while Duree focused on community college presidents; this study included respondents from four executive level positions as well as ASPs, midlevel administrators, and administrators from district offices. The results are described below in relation to the research questions.

Which of the AACC Core Competencies Do California Community College Leaders Believe are Essential for Effective Leaders?

Organizational Strategy

Respondents were nearly unanimous in their support of the core competency of organizational management and its components. Responses indicated that 97% to 100% either agreed or somewhat agreed that each aspect of organizational strategy was essential to the effective performance of administrators at their college. The one noticeable difference in responses was in relation to accreditation. Because this question was added after the pilot study and not part of the original AACC core competencies, it is not discussed in further detail here, but it will be discussed in the recommendations for further studies.

Resource Management

As with the core competency of organizational strategy, respondents agreed or somewhat agreed overwhelmingly that individual aspects of the competency were essential to the effective performance of administrators at their college. However, their level of agreement was not as strong in that higher percentages of respondents indicated they somewhat agreed rather than agreed that a specific aspect was essential. Table 2 illustrates the responses to the specific aspects of resource management; the responses only include agree or somewhat agree. As with organizational strategy, however, the question regarding accreditation yielded the lowest overall level of agreement. This suggests, perhaps that knowing how to link accreditation processes, such as the self-study or external review, to program assessment and resource allocation is not viewed as essential to the effective performance of administrators as other areas might be.

Table 2. Responses related to resource management (Item wording: Please indicate the degree to which you believe each aspect of resource management is essential to the effective performance of administrators at your college)

	Agree (%)	Somewhat agree (%)	Total number of responses
Ensure accountability in reporting.	84.5	13.4	97
Support operational decisions by managing information systems.	55.7	38.1	97
Support operational decisions by ensuring the integrity and integration of reporting systems and databases.	72.2	23.7	97
Develop and manage resource assessment, planning, budgeting, acquisition, and allocation consistent with the college master plan.	82.5	14.4	97
Develop and manage resources assessment, planning, budgeting, acquisition, and allocation consistent with local, state, and national policies.	69.1	26.8	97
Use accreditation process (self-study and external review) to assess programs and allocate resources.	56.7	32.0	97
Seek ethical alternative funding sources.	65.6	29.2	96
Implement financial strategies to support programs, services, staff, and facilities.	86.5	11.5	96
Implement a comprehensive human resources system that includes recruitment, hiring, reward, and performance management systems.	68.8	25.0	96
Implement a comprehensive human resources system that fosters the professional development and advancement of all staff.	75.0	21.9	96
Employ organizational, time management, planning, and delegation skills.	76.0	19.8	96
Manage conflict and change in ways that contribute to the long-term viability of the organization.	89.6	9.4	96

Communication

Respondents indicated high levels of agreement that each aspect of communication is essential to the performance of administrators at their college; in each area at least 95% of respondents indicated some level of agreement. They expressed 100% agreement that the ability to convey ideas clearly in writing is an essential skill.

Collaboration

California community colleges operate in an environment built on shared governance, thus it is not surprising that respondents would indicate especially high levels of agreement that collaboration is an essential skill for administrators. In all areas, a minimum of 97% of the respondents indicated some level of agreement (either agree or somewhat agree) that the ability to collaborate with others, build networks, manage conflict, cultivate involvement, develop teams, and facilitate shared decision making were essential skills. The ability to build partnerships to advance the mission, vision, and goals of the college was perceived as essential by all respondents.

Community College Advocacy

Again, respondents indicated very high levels of agreement (98% to 100%) that various aspects of community college advocacy were essential to the effective performance of administrators. However, only 77.8% of respondents indicated they agreed or somewhat agreed that it is essential for administrators to “represent the community college as a model of higher education that can be replicated in international settings.”

Professionalism

In the area of professionalism, respondents again indicated high levels of agreement that professionalism is effective to the performance of administrators at their college. However, just over two-thirds (68.9%) agreed that it was essential for administrators to “understand and endorse the history, philosophy, and culture of the community college.” Slightly less than one-third (30%) somewhat agreed this was essential; and 1.1% neither agreed or disagreed that this was essential ($n = 90$). Similarly, 62.2% agreed that it was essential to the effective performance of administrators at their college to contribute to the profession through professional development programs, professional organizational leadership, and research/publication; 34.4% somewhat agreed this was essential, 2.2% neither agreed or disagreed this was essential, and 1.1% disagreed this was essential ($n = 90$).

Overall, respondents consistently agreed or somewhat agreed that the six core competencies were essential to the effective performance of administrators at their college. This level of agreement persisted even when the data were disaggregated according to each person's position at the college. Perhaps this is because, as one respondent indicated, the core competencies are hard to disagree with as they represent ideals, or as the respondent suggested, “apple pie.” The findings presented in this section support previous research (Duree, 2007) and suggest that core competencies provide a framework with

which to consider essential leadership skills, in particular those important to community college administrators. They can also be used to assess the strength of a leadership team, identify core competencies that may need development, and identify those that could be added to strengthen the team. The next section describes respondents' beliefs regarding the acquisition and development of the core competencies, including which, if any, of the core competencies might be developed through doctoral studies.

Which of the AACC Core Competencies do California Community College Leaders Believe can be Developed through Doctoral Studies?

To help answer this question, respondents were asked to indicate how they believe community college administrators best acquire and develop each core competency, which could be acquired and developed through doctoral studies, and which are the three most important competencies for doctoral programs in educational/community college leadership to address. In response to the question, "Please indicate how you believe community college administrators best acquire and develop the core competency of [insert competency]," respondents overwhelmingly indicated leadership competencies are acquired and developed through on-the-job training, mentoring, professional development activities. In all but one area, organizational strategy, less than half of the respondents indicated that the competency was best acquired/developed through doctoral studies (see Table 3).

While respondents indicated a strong preference for on the job training, mentoring, and professional development, this is not to

Table 3. How administrators best acquire/develop each competency (Item wording: Please indicate how you believe community college administrators best acquire and develop the core competency . . . [check all that apply])

	On the job training	Mentoring	Professional development	Doctoral studies ¹
Organizational strategy	85.6% (77)	83.3% (76)	73.3% (66)	68.9% (62)
Resource management	93.3% (84)	75.6% (68)	80.0% (72)	45.6% (41)
Communication	83.3% (75)	82.2% (74)	81.1% (73)	38.9% (35)
Collaboration	87.8% (79)	84.4% (76)	82.2% (74)	38.9% (35)
Community college advocacy	73.3% (66)	85.6% (77)	75.6% (68)	48.9% (44)
Professionalism	84.4% (76)	91.1% (82)	81.1% (73)	46.7% (42)

¹Doctoral studies in educational/community college leadership.

Percentage of total responses, followed by (number of responses).

Total number of responses per core competency = 90.

say that these are the only means for developing professional skills. Respondents were also asked to indicate which of the core competencies could be acquired/developed through doctoral studies. Most respondents (94.4%) indicated that organizational strategy could be acquired/developed through doctoral studies. Resource management and communication were also ranked highly in terms of doctoral studies, with over 70% of respondents indicating these competencies could be acquired/developed in a doctoral program. Approximately two-thirds of respondents indicated that the remaining competencies, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism could be acquired/developed in a doctoral program of study. The top three answers—organizational strategy, resource management, and communication—were also cited in a subsequent question as the most important for doctoral programs in educational/community college leadership to address. The responses to this question varied somewhat by position: For example, among the chief business officers, the chief executive officers, the chief instructional officers, and the chief student services officers, over 70% of the respondents in each position ranked organizational strategy as one of the three most important competencies for doctoral programs to address; however, only 57% of the academic senate presidents ranked this as one of the top three. Because the disaggregated data result in smaller numbers of responses in each subgroup, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the responses. The responses do suggest, however, that further investigation of the core competencies from a variety of institutional perspectives would be beneficial and informative.

Three competencies (organizational strategy, resource management, and communication) emerged as candidates for development through doctoral studies. It is likely that additional competencies can be acquired and developed in a doctoral program of study; the next section addresses the additional competencies identified by survey respondents.

What Additional Competencies do California Community College Leaders Believe can be Acquired or Developed through Doctoral Studies?

Respondents were provided the opportunity to describe any additional competencies they thought could be developed through doctoral studies in educational/community college leadership. The narrative responses included fund raising/institutional advancement, strategic thinking, being a mentor, community development and leadership, working with diverse populations, technology, collaboration with

K–12 partners, and data-driven decision making. Others commented that doctoral studies could supplement (not substitute for) on the job training, mentoring, and professional development. A few others seemed unconvinced regarding the benefits of doctoral studies stating: “Too many doctors are unable to function in a collaborative, meaningful manner because they are too focused on the expertise of their degree”; and “Doctoral studies provide for a higher degree of expertise in certain areas but are not likely to make up for an equivalent amount of time working under the tutelage of a quality manager/program.” And one respondent simply stated: “I don’t believe one can acquire these competencies through doctoral studies.”

The findings of this study appear to support the use of the AACC core competencies as a framework for identifying essential skills for community college leaders. The competencies also can be used to design training, professional development, and mentoring activities, thus ensuring that administrators develop essential skills necessary for effective leadership. In addition, the findings suggest that three of the core competencies—organizational strategy, resource management, and communication—can be acquired through doctoral studies. At the same time, the findings support prior studies (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Duree, 2007) that indicate a strong preference for a somewhat organic path to developing the core competencies. This is a path that includes on the job training, mentoring, and both internal and external professional development activities.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

For community college leaders in California, the emphasis on professional development activities poses a dilemma: Many respondents indicated that while they value professional development, they also reported that funds to support professional development are vulnerable during difficult economic times. In the fiscal crisis of 2009, California community colleges face unprecedented budget reductions. Many respondents wrote that funds for both internal professional development and external professional development (conference travel and professional memberships) were the first they expected to be cut. This potentially leaves community college practitioners without access to a major avenue for developing the very skills needed to effectively lead their college or district. It also shifts the commitment for professional development from the institution to the individual. While it can be argued that each person is ultimately responsible for her/his own learning and professional development, it

can also be argued that institutions benefit from such learning and, in turn, have a responsibility to invest in the development of the organization. This shift from an institutional to individual commitment may make it more difficult for aspiring administrators or early-career administrators (who may be at a lower salary level) to fully support their professional development. It will likely mean more emphasis on pursuing mentoring relationships and on the job training, both of which rely on the willingness of more experienced leaders to share their time and energy. Additionally, such an approach could inhibit innovation and insulate leaders from new ideas outside of their college, district, region, or state.

Some individuals may turn to EdD programs in lieu of other professional development activities. Consequently, the findings from this study can guide doctoral program faculty in determining whether or not the curriculum supports the development of skills identified as essential for effective leadership. Program faculty can use these findings to review their courses as well as their program learning outcomes to ensure alignment between course content and essential leadership competencies. Furthermore, because respondents indicated a strong preference for nonclassroom-based learning experiences—such as mentoring and on the job training—program faculty can consider how they might integrate these activities into their EdD programs. Such integration will expand opportunities for doctoral students to develop their skills.

AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study confirms prior research that indicates practitioners may prefer noninstructional approaches to developing their leadership competencies, and it extends previous research related to the relevance of graduate-preparation programs. It also suggests there may be some doubt among community college leaders about the potential for doctoral programs to develop the competencies for effective leadership. Given the strong preference for on the job training, professional development, and mentoring, a future study of community college leaders who are pursuing a doctorate in educational/community college leadership could illuminate the significance these students place on the doctorate, their reasons for pursuing the degree, and the perceived value added by their doctoral studies. In addition, because respondents indicated the six core competencies are essential to effective leadership, an analysis of how these core competencies are integrated into administrative practices (i.e., position announcements,

selection of candidates, setting goals, and performance evaluations) merits study. Finally, prior studies have examined the perspectives of college presidents in relation to the core competencies and graduate preparation (Duree, 2007; Hammons & Miller, 2006); this study incorporated additional perspectives including those of faculty leaders. While the respondents generally agreed throughout the survey, some subtle differences, as noted above, suggest the need to continue examining study the core competencies from a variety of institutional perspectives; this could help aspiring administrators determine if different competencies are essential for the specific administrative position they are seeking.

Two issues of concern also arose from this study and will benefit from additional investigation. Respondents anticipate reductions in funding for professional development activities including internal activities, conference participation, and association memberships. This and other studies have demonstrated that professional development is a primary means of acquiring and developing leadership skills. Further studies that examine the impact of reduced access to professional development opportunities may help us better understand the impact of budget cuts on leadership development and organizational health.

In response to a recommendation from the pilot survey, I added two areas related to accreditation processes under the competency of resource management and organizational strategy. In relation to the core competency of resource management, respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they believed the following aspect was essential to the effective performance of administrators at their college: "Use accreditation processes (self-study and external review) to assess programs and allocate resources." Just over half of the respondents indicated they agreed with this, while nearly one-third somewhat agreed.

Under the core competency of organizational strategy, respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they believed the following aspect was essential to the effective performance of administrators at their college: "Use accreditation processes (self-study and external visit) to assess and strengthen institutional activities (such as, teaching, learning, student support services, & resource allocation)." Although over 90% agreed or somewhat agreed this was important, this question generated 13 narrative comments including such comments as "The current accreditation process has lost the focus on educational quality." There was also the following comment:

I believe the accreditation process has become a process of compliance. There is nothing inherently wrong with compliance. However,

when compliance to specific standards is forced upon institutions and the standards themselves are not based on research evidence or a demonstrable linkage to positive outcomes for the organization, then it can have a negative effect on colleges in terms of creativity, innovation, and emergent strategy.

The narrative comments regarding accreditation processes suggest that respondents may have been commenting not on leadership competencies but on the changing nature of the accreditation process itself. Further studies regarding accreditation processes in relation to the core competencies could begin to answer this question.

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